St James College
Attendance Policy and Procedures

Introduction

St James College is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students which enhances their holistic educational needs.

Research shows that regular attendance is integral to successful academic, employment and social outcomes. Accordingly, it is important that students, staff and parents/carers have the same understanding of the importance of regular student attendance.

St James is committed to promoting the key messages of the "Every Day Counts" campaign which promotes the following:

- All children should be enrolled at school and attend school every day
- Schools should monitor, communicate and implement strategies to improve regular school attendance
- Truanting and chronic absenteeism can place a student in an unsafe situation and impact on their future employability and life choices.
- Attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community

Rationale

To provide students with the ability to achieve to the best of their ability and to create a clear, inclusive and simple attendance policy that promotes high expectations of student attendance.

Responsibilities

Parents/ Carers responsibilities:

- Ensure that their child attends schools on every school day for the program in which they are enrolled.
- Provide a satisfactory explanation of all absences, that is, any time during which a student is not attending or participating in their educational programs as timetabled including excursions and school events.
- Contact the school prior to any planned absences. Where it is not possible, parents must provide the reason for any absence prior to 9am to Student Services on the day of absence or alternatively leave a msg on the College Absenstee Line 3225 4254.
- In the case of planned absences during the term or exam period parents are to seek permission from the Principal.
- If the extended absence is approved by the Principal, parents need to contact their child’s Pastoral Coordinator to organize school work for the period of absence.
- If the extended absence is medically based then parents are expected to contact their child’s Pastoral Coordinator to organize school work for the period of absence.
- If a student is refusing to attend school contact the Pastoral Coordinator. Initiate or attend meetings to seek support and discuss their child's attendance or participation in educational programs.
- Provide a note in the diary if their child requires to leave school early.
- Provide a written note explaining any lateness.
- Advise the school of any changes to address, email or phone numbers to ensure the College records are accurate. Up to date data is essential in an emergency.
**Student Responsibilities:**

- Students must attend school each day. They must be on time and have all the necessary equipment.
- Never leave school during school hours without permission from parents/carers or the school and without signing out at Student Services.
- Report to Student Services if arriving at school after 8.40am.
- Ensure all missed school work is completed.
- Make up missed time.

**School Responsibilities:**

- Regularly inform students, staff and parents/carers regarding the attendance policy and procedures and making this publicly available through the College's website, newsletters and enrolment packages.
- Monitor student attendance daily through roll marking procedures.
- Notify parents/carers of any unexplained absences, requesting a satisfactory explanation for their child's absence.
- Notify the Assistant Principal - Pastoral when concerned that the explanation for student absence is unsatisfactory.
- Discuss individual attendance with students and offer support and help to parents and students when school attendance has become a problem.
- Provide students with school work when they are absent for legitimate extended periods of time.
- Notify the relevant authorities if non-attendance persists.

**Procedures for school attendance**

**Attendance:**

If students are absent from school at any time, parents/carers should advise the College by 9.30am and provide a satisfactory explanation for the absence. They can do this by completing both points below:

- Phoning the Absentee line on 3225 4254, prior to 9.30am.
- Writing a note in the students' diary to the Homeroom Teacher on their return to school.

St. James will maintain attendance records and monitor the attendance of enrolled students through the implementation of the following procedures:

- Students are expected to be at school by 8.20am and to go to Homeroom in adequate time. Student attendance is taken for the first time by the Homeroom Teacher in AM Homeroom and a daily absentee report is distributed to all teachers.
- Students continually late to AM Homeroom are to be referred to Pastoral Coordinators.
- A roll is also taken at PM Homeroom and any discrepancies are reported to the Pastoral Coordinator for follow up each day.

**Late Arrival at School / Classes**

- Any student who arrives to school after Homeroom is to report to Student Services for a late stamp. This stamp is to be sighted by the class teacher upon their arrival to class, after which the student presents the late stamp to their Homeroom Teacher at PM Homeroom. A record of latecomers for the day will be kept and if there is no excuse provided by the Parent/Carer, the student will be detained at school for the duration of the lateness.
- Any student who is late for classes will be given a suitable consequence by their classroom teacher. Persistent lateness to class will be referred to the Pastoral Coordinator.
Early Departure from School

- Leave from school (appointments with doctors etc.) can only be given via parental request. Once this is ascertained, the student is given a leave stamp in their diary which must be signed by the student’s Pastoral Coordinator.
- In the case of illness, the student, under teacher direction and written authorisation, is to report to the Student Services, who will phone parents if home leave is necessary and notify the Pastoral Coordinator.

Queensland Legislation regarding Truancy Laws

The current position is that a young person must be earning or learning until the age of 17.

The legislation includes:

- Making it compulsory for a young person to stay at school until they complete Year 10 or turn 16yrs of age, which ever comes first, and in addition,
- Participating in education and training for:
  - A further two years
  - Until they gain a Senior Certificate, or
  - Until they gain a Certificate III Vocational qualification, or
  - Until they have turned 17 years of age

Exemptions include young people who enter full-time work after they have completed Year 10 or who have turned 16ys of age.

Truancy:

Students found to be truant from class/es will be managed in accordance with the Student Support Procedures. House Pastoral Coordinators will communicate with parents/carers and if necessary set up a meeting with parents/carers, student and the Dean of Students. The behaviour will be noted on the students’ file and any time missed will be required to be made up. This time could be done by participating in community service or in reviewing the school work that was missed as a result of the truancy.

Chronic absenteeism

St James identifies chronic absenteeism as students who are absent from school for more than 10% of the time a student is expected to be present at school.

The issue of chronic absenteeism is complex and covers a range of behaviours, including school refusal. It is important for schools to investigate the patterns and underlying causes of non- attendance so that appropriate strategies that address the specific type of absenteeism can be implemented.

There is no quick or simple solution, nor a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing absenteeism. However partnerships between school, parents and the local community can assist in reducing chronic absenteeism.

At a school level chronic absenteeism is to be managed by Pastoral Coordinators, Counsellors and the Assistant Principal - Pastoral. Together they will communicate with all necessary stakeholders to ensure that they are well informed.

In particular, Pastoral Coordinators, Counsellor and the Assistant Principal - Pastoral will liaise with parents/carers to assist develop the appropriate strategies to ensure the student presents at school on a regular basis. Strategies such as issuing facts sheets, developing home based behaviour contracts, the use of restorative processes and connecting with outside agencies may be implemented to assist students to return to school.
## Causes of Absenteeism

- Disinterest in school-related activities
- Poor performance in school-related activities
- Family pressure to work
- Peer pressure, including bullying
- Falling behind

- Dysfunctional family situation
- Anxiety (panic attacks, phobias)
- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Other health or mental health issues

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<th>Terms</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Possible Responses</th>
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| Chronic Absenteeism | Persistent of habitual absence or lateness  
Students with high levels of absences, variously defined as 10% or more school days absent  
Parents may provide explanations for absences, but these explanations may be considered unreasonable | Parents and family members play an important role in assisting the students to re-integrate back and remain engaged in school. Schools may wish to:  
- Notify parents of their legal obligations and the importance of schooling and of continuity in learning from the early years  
- Encourage parents to participate in parenting skills training (e.g. organisational skills)  
- Encourage the development of supportive networks with other parents (e.g. establish a parents club)  
- Encourage parents to seek support from and communicate regularly with teachers and the school | |
| School refusal | A form of chronic absenteeism  
Parents often are aware of the absenteeism but are unable to address it  
Students who are almost completely unwilling or unable to attend school because of:  
- Their past school experiences  
- Psycho-social reasons related to clinical levels of anxiety  
- A developed habit of absence | The school gathers information about the student and family to help understand the nature of and reasons for the absences.  
The school implements strategies to address issues like learning problems or bullying where appropriate.  
School support staff such as Guidance Officers  
Where appropriate the school refers students and parents to relevant professionals (e.g. counsellors and psychologists) for programs according to the individual student’s needs  
Solutions may require intervention and support, as for truancy (see below) | |
| Truancy | Disengagement from school  
May be accompanied by alienation from the school culture  
Unexplained absences from school perhaps without the knowledge of the parent/s | Where the reasons for truancy pertain to aspects of the school (e.g. poor relationships with teachers), the school implements strategies to address these aspects.  
The school alone may not be able to address all of the needs of the student (e.g. domestic violence at home, child abuse, etc). Schools should work with the family and liaise with other agencies such as:  
- Department of Child Safety;  
- Department of Communities;  
- Queensland Police Child Protection Investigation Unit; Supportlink and;  
- Other non-government organisations. |
Regular School Attendance
Information for parents and carers

Did you know? Research shows that in Queensland, higher student attendance at school is associated, on average, with higher student achievement.

Why is regular attendance at school important?
Regular school attendance will mean that your child has a better chance in life. Your son will achieve better when they go to school all day, every school day.
- They learn better;
- They make friends;
- They are happier;
- They have a brighter future.

Why must I send my child to school?
Under Queensland law, you must make sure your child of school age is enrolled and attends school all day, every school day unless they have an acceptable reason. Illness, doing work experience or competing in a school sporting event are acceptable reasons for being absent from school.

Principals decide if the reason given for your child’s absence is acceptable. Avoid keeping your child away from school for:
- Birthdays, shopping, visiting family and friends, if they sleep in, looking after other children, minor check ups or care such as hair/beauty appointments.

Routine medical or other health appointments should be made either before or after school or during the school holidays.

What should I do if our family is going on a holiday in school time?
You are encouraged not to schedule holidays during school time. If your family holiday is during school time, let the Principal know in advance and talk about what arrangements can be made for your child. Depending on the circumstance the College may be able to provide tasks for them to complete while they are absent or assist you to organise an exemption from schooling.

Do I need to let the College know if my child has been away from school?
Yes, you must let the College know the reason why your child has been absent from school on the same day as their absence. If possible, advise the College beforehand.

Are you having problems getting your child to school for some of these reasons?
- Won’t get out of bed in the morning;
- Won’t go to bed at night;
- Can’t find their uniform, books, school bag...
- Slow to eat breakfast;
- Haven’t done their homework;
- Watching TV;
- Have a test or presentation to do, have an assignment to hand in;
- It’s their birthday.

If so, develop a behaviour contract to assist to:
- Have a set time to go to bed;
- Have a set time to get out of bed;
- Have uniform and school bag ready the night before;
- Have a set time for staring and finishing breakfast;
- Set a time for daily homework activities;
- Speak about school positively;
- Be firm send your child to school every school day including their birthday and the last day of term!

What should I do if my child won’t go to school?
You should contact your child’s Pastoral Coordinator as soon as possible for advice and support.